



Mission: Polar expendable vehicle launch on a McDonnell Douglas Delta II rocket.

Launch date, time: Feb. 24, 6:24 a.m. (EST) from Space Launch Complex-2, Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA.

Mission synopsis: Polar is one of two spacecraft in NASA's Global Geospace Science mission. Polar and sister spacecraft, Wind, will perform simultaneous, coordinated measurements of key regions of Earth's space environment.



Mission: STS-76 on Atlantis.

Launch date, time: March 21, 3:35 a.m. from Launch Pad 39B.

Synopsis: The third docking between the U.S. Space Shuttle Atlantis and the Russian Space Station Mir will be highlighted by several activities: a crew transfer, an extravehicular activity (EVA), logistics operations and scientific research.

Landing date, time: March 30, 8:05 a.m. at Kennedy Space Center's Shuttle Landing Facility.

Spaceport News

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John F. Kennedy Space Center

Civil servants offered new retirement options

Kennedy Space Center is offering a program to eligible civil service employees that will enable them to sample retirement while giving the center the benefit of utilizing their years of experience.

The Careers Plus program offers employees two new options for retirement. The first will allow a worker to "try out" retirement for 12-18 months at which time they may choose to be rehired, either full time or part time, as reemployed annu-

itants. The pay structure for the full-time positions will essentially make up the difference between the worker's retirement income and the step salary at the time of retirement. For part-time positions that differential will be divided and paid per hours worked.

The second option will allow participants to retire and immediately be rehired. Employees may work up to 1,040 hours a year for up to two years. Work may be either part time or full

time until the annual limit on hours is reached.

Program participation is strictly voluntary and only those civil servants who are eligible for early or optional retirement can participate.

Positions the rehired retirees fill will be consistent with the retiree's previous grade and qualifications and will involve work that is needed to accomplish the agency's mission. Work will be either inside or outside

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A SMOOTH COUNTDOWN culminates in an on-time liftoff as the Space Shuttle Columbia climbs skyward after its launch at 3:18 p.m. Feb. 22. Aboard for Mission STS-75 is an international crew headed by Mission Commander Andrew Allen; Pilot Scott "Doc" Horowitz; Payload Commander Franklin Chang-Diaz; and Mission Specialists Jeffrey Hoffman, Maurizio Cheli and Claude Nicollier. Cheli, from Italy, and Nicollier, from Switzerland, both represent the European Space Agency. Assigned as payload specialist is Italian Umberto Guidoni, who represents the Italian Space Agency.

'Beautiful' launch draws big crowd

The STS-75 launch drew a near-capacity crowd of spectators, featured a new viewing site, and increased the number of astronauts and cosmonauts working in space to a dozen.

"It was a beautiful countdown and it turned out to be a beautiful day," Launch Integration Manager Loren Shriver said in a post-launch briefing Feb. 22. The Space Shuttle Columbia lifted off on time from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39B at 3:18 p.m.

Although the primary payload on the mission, the Tethered Satellite System (TSS-1R) unexpectedly separated just as the satellite was nearing the full extent of its deployment from the Shuttle at about 8:30 p.m. on Feb. 25, science activities on the mission resulted in the collection of about five hours of extensive data on the performance of the satellite and tether dynamics and electrodynamics. NASA is forming an indepen-

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